

REMARKS:

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-8 were rejected. Claim 5 has been amended. New claims 9 and 10 have been added. Thus, claims 1-10 are now pending and under consideration. No new matter has been added. The rejections are traversed below.

OBJECTION TO THE DRAWINGS AS FILED:

On page 2 of the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner indicates that the drawings as filed are acceptable for examination and publication purposes.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a):

Claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,937,391 (Ikeda).

The Examiner solely relies on Ikeda as teaching the features recited in claims 1-8 of the present application. The U.S. filing date of Ikeda is May 29, 1997 and Ikeda claims a benefit of a foreign filing based on Japanese Application No. 8-182556 filed on July 11, 1996.

The present application was filed on July 26, 2003 and claims a benefit of a foreign filing based on Japanese Patent Application No. 5-82905, filed on April 9, 1993. Further, the present application also claims priority of parent application Serial No. 08/187,543, filed on January 28, 1994.

Accordingly, because Ikeda was filed *after* the present invention was made (i.e., the earliest date of July 11, 1996 of Ikeda is after the date of both parent application Serial No. 08/187,543 and Japanese Patent Application No. 5-82905 upon which the present application relies), Ikeda does not qualify as a prior art reference under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that Ikeda be removed as a reference.

NEW CLAIMS:

New claims 9 and 10 are added herein. Proper support for new claims 9 and 10 can be found at least at paragraph 239 of the present application.

CONCLUSION:

In accordance with the foregoing, the Specification and claim 5 are amended, and reconsideration of all outstanding rejections is respectfully requested.

If there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested

to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

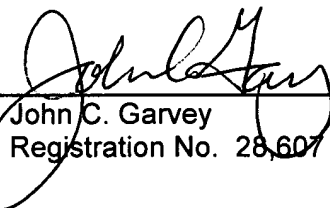
Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

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4-22-06

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